Chronic Wasting Disease Management Program

Fall, 2002

Saskatchewan Environment (SE) has been monitoring wild white-tailed deer (WTD), mule deer (MD) and elk for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the province since 1997. As of July, 2002 three cases of CWD have been confirmed in wild mule deer in the Manito Sandhills area of Wildlife Management Zone (WMZ) 46 south of Lloydminster. All three cases were adult males, found within approximately six kilometres of each other in a portion of the zone currently designated as the Herd Reduction Area (HRA).

Saskatchewan Environment has developed the Fall 2002 CWD Management Program in co-operation with Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization (SAFRR), Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and provincial, national and international disease control experts.

Province Wide Sampling Summary 1997 - 2002

Year	WTD	MD	Elk	Total/year	Test Negative	Test Positive
1997	36	2	0	38	all	none
1998	18	91	2	111	all	none
1999	57	79	44	180	all	none
2000	726	185	89	1000	999	1 MD
2001 spring	58	155	0	213	212	1 MD
2001 fall	2,236	1,077	340	3,653	all	none
2002 spring	26	159	0	185	184	1 MD
Total to date	**3,154**	**1,751**	**475**	**5,380**	**5377**	**3 MD**

CWD Management Goal

SE will continue to minimize the impact of CWD on wild deer populations by reducing the prevalence of CWD in Saskatchewan with a longer term goal of eradication. This goal will serve as the primary basis for setting mule deer and white-tailed deer harvest and management objectives.

How long will this take?

- Current science indicates that annual, statistically valid monitoring for five years is required in an area with no positives being found before the area can be considered CWD free. This approach is being consistently applied on domestic facilities through the mandatory surveillance program operated by SAFRR and the national CWD Certification Program operated by the CFIA. SE is using this approach as a guideline for our program to control and, if possible, eradicate CWD in the wild. Therefore CWD sample collection will continue in the Herd Reduction Area in WMZ 46, which is considered infected. Areas considered at risk, designated as High Priority Areas (HPAs) may be monitored for more than one year but possibly less than five pending the size of the sample obtained and the test results.

The Fall 2002 Program is designed to:

A) **Control Spread and Work to Eradicate** CWD from the Herd Reduction Area (HRA). Herd reduction is an eradication tool which will be evaluated on an annual basis. If no new positive cases are found for five consecutive years, and sample sizes for each year are considered valid, the HRA will be considered CWD free and a monitoring program utilizing regular and draw hunting seasons will be designed. If positive cases continue to be detected, herd reduction will continue and the HRA may be expanded.

B) **Detect** CWD by continuing a focused CWD surveillance program in areas of risk to determine where CWD exists and at what prevalence (see description of 2002 Monitoring Area and HPAs). Province-wide surveillance is a secondary priority because of lower risk, but will continue in 2002.

C) **Inform** the public. SE will report on the status of CWD in Saskatchewan and provide the latest scientific information.

A) Control Spread and Work to Eradicate CWD

Herd Reduction Area (HRA)

The objective is to reduce the MD and WTD herd as much as possible within approximately a six kilometre radius of the locations where three positive animals were found in WMZ 46. This approach significantly reduces the size of the HRA for this year, compared to 2001, a move which is consistent with recent experience in the State of Nebraska.

Either-sex and antlerless MD draws return for WMZ 46 for the fall of 2002. Quota size has been expanded to encourage the harvest of additional MD. As well, successful draw applicants in WMZ 46 will be mailed a free Control Permit (CP) valid for antlerless deer (either MD or WTD) valid from November 11 until the end of the regular rifle WTD season.

The normal WTD season will be open in WMZ 46 this fall. In addition to the regular season, hunters will be able to obtain a free CP valid for antlerless deer (either MD or WTD) during the entire regular rifle WTD season. A free WMZ 46 HRA CP will be issued on request to holders of 2002 Wildlife Habitat Certificates.

A list of locations where CPs are available and conditions for their use is in the High Priority Areas section.

B) Detect CWD

2002 CWD Monitoring Area

CWD test results indicate that the distribution of CWD in wild deer is likely limited to a localized area in the northwestern agricultural portion of Saskatchewan; WMZ's 26 (north of Highway 51), 27, 45 to 47, 55, 67 (west of Highway 4), 68 N, 68S and 69. This area is designated as the 2002 CWD Monitoring Area. Test results from the remainder of the province suggest that, if the disease is present, it is at a prevalence of less than 0.5%.

All hunters who harvest a MD or WTD in one of the above zones are requested to submit the head sample for CWD testing. Antlers may be retained.

Significant surveillance of the provincial deer herd has not found any evidence of CWD, with the exception of one location in the Manito Sand Hills. Although much remains unknown about the disease, Saskatchewan Health and other health authorities indicate that CWD poses no known risk to the health of humans or traditional domestic livestock. **As a precautionary measure, SE offices will continue to accept head samples from hunter-harvested mule deer and white-tailed deer and, on request, elk taken throughout the province.**

High Priority Areas (HPAs)

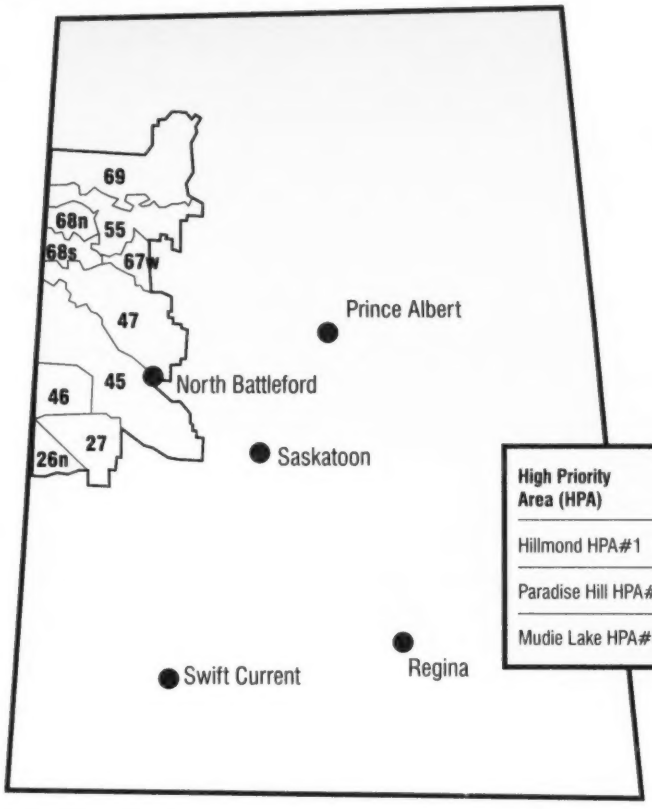
The objective is to determine whether CWD is present by collecting a high number of MD and WTD samples in approximately a six kilometre radius of areas deemed "highly contaminated" by the CFIA.

The removal of most or all of the animals in the HPA may be required to achieve a scientifically valid sample size. Populations are expected to rebound quickly assuming normal winters, average reproduction and influx of animals from outside of the HPA into the available habitat.

American state authorities with more than 20 years of CWD experience support timely herd reduction as the best approach to the control and eventual eradication of CWD in the wild. They also suggest that inaction will result in spread to new locations and eventual crashes in deer populations. Recent information from Nebraska supports an earlier Colorado-based theory that CWD is a "pocket" disease. That means it tends to spread slowly in the immediate vicinity, which in the recent Nebraska case was approximately a six kilometre radius around a CWD-positive location.

Three HPAs are identified for 2002; near Hillmond, Mudie Lake and Paradise Hill. These HPAs for 2002 are significantly smaller than 2001. Others have been eliminated for this year as they are currently considered to be low risk.

2002 CWD Monitoring Area



Sampling Targets for HPAs

High Priority Area (HPA)	Size in Square km/mi	Mule Deer Pop. Estimate	Mule Deer Target	White-Tailed Deer Pop. Estimate	White-Tailed Deer Target
Hillmond HPA#1	225/86.7	115	115	115	115
Paradise Hill HPA#2	221/85.5	7	7	416	317
Mudie Lake HPA#5	221/85.5	0	0	678	397

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Hillmond (HPA #1) and Paradise Hill (HPA #2)

Hillmond and Paradise Hill HPAs will see similar approaches to CWD sample collection as hunter activity is similar and most of the lands are privately owned.

a) **MD Draw Season** - either-sex and antlerless MD draws are in place for WMZ's 45 and 47 for the fall of 2002. Quota size has been expanded to encourage the harvest of additional MD. Successful draw applicants are eligible for a free CP valid for antlerless deer (either MD or WTD) valid from November 11 until the end of the regular rifle WTD season.

b) **WTD Regular Rifle Season** - the normal WTD season will be open in WMZ's 45, 47 and 68 this fall. In addition to the regular season, hunters will be able to obtain a free CP valid for antlerless deer (either MD or WTD) during the entire regular rifle WTD Season.

Where do I obtain a CP? What are the rules for using a CP?

Private landowners in HPA #1 and HPA #2 will be briefed on the CWD program by local Conservation Officers and offered the option to distribute free Cps to hunters for antlerless deer (either MD or WTD). Saskatchewan Environment will maintain a list of landowners who have CPs available, and will direct hunters to those landowners. In the event that a landowner does not want to distribute the CPs, but will allow access to hunters, CPs will be available at local SE offices. This will operate similar to depredation tags.

CPs will be available at the following SE offices: Pierceland, Dorintosh, Loon Lake, Meadow Lake, Lloydminster, North Battleford, Biggar, Chitek Lake, Big River, Spiritwood, Kindersley, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina.

CPs will also be available at the following Rural Municipality offices: Senlac, Unity, Marsden, Macklin and Neilburg plus the Rural Service Centre office in Unity.

- All animals taken under a CP must have the heads turned in at an SE office or check station for CWD testing.
- Hunters may harvest more than one animal, but must turn in the deer head sample before obtaining a second CP.
- CPs for regular WTD rifle season hunters are valid only during the rifle season in the WMZ they are hunting.
- All hunters obtaining a CP will be provided a detailed map of the area where the CP is valid.
- CP hunters must possess a 2002 Wildlife Habitat Certificate.
- CP hunters must not waste the meat of animals taken.
- **All hunters are reminded that fawns (under 6 - 8 months of age) cannot be tested and should not be submitted for testing.**
- Canadian Resident and Non Resident hunters are not eligible for CPs.

Check Stations will be located in: Macklin (North Park Esso), Unity (J & E Convenience Store), Neilburg (Petro Canada Filling Station), Marsden (Sid's Service), Senlac (R.M. Office), Lloydminster (Fas Gas Yellowhead Service), Paradise Hill (Paradise Hill Meat House), St. Walburg (Kim's Service Station), Ministikwin (Ministikwin Trading Post), Goodsoil (Goodsoil Custom Cuts Butcher Shop), Maidstone (16-21 Husky Gas Station), and Loon Lake and Pierceland Saskatchewan Environment offices.

Mudie Lake (HPA # 5)

The objective for HPA #5 is consistent with the other areas however, it provides unique challenges. There is limited local hunting pressure, significant big game outfitting in the area and much of the north east portion of the area was burnt off in the spring of 2002.

A regular WTD season will occur although the level of hunting activity of WTD in this area by Saskatchewan residents is believed to be low. Free CPs will also be available at SE offices for any hunter who wishes to hunt in this HPA. All CP conditions listed above apply.

Other Sampling Efforts

- **SE Staff Sample Collection:** Supplementary collection of samples by SE staff will be considered for the HRA and HPAs pending the success of the hunter-based program planned for this fall.
- **Other Sample Sources:** SE will again collect samples from road-killed deer in co-operation with Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation, and from Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation hide boxes. This effort will only be conducted within the 2002 CWD Monitoring Area.
- **Targeted Surveillance:** SE encourages the public to report sightings of "sick" deer. Investigating "sick" deer has proven an effective tool in the USA for monitoring for CWD. People are reminded that several diseases, parasites or malnutrition may cause an animal to appear sick. There has never been a documented case of a wild animal displaying symptoms of CWD in Saskatchewan.

Commonly Asked Questions

How do I prepare and care for a sample?

All hunters submitting samples for CWD testing should:

- Remove the head of any adult MD or WTD. You may detach the antlers but when doing so try to remove as little of the brain as possible.
- If antlers are detached, place a moist paper towel over the exposed brain.

For samples taken under a CP:

- Complete the Head Seal portion of your CP. Complete information and legible handwriting is critical. (Pencil is preferred).
- Bag the head, and attach the Head Seal to the outside of the bag.
- Freeze the head as soon as possible, unless you are dropping it off at a check station or SE office that day.
- You may check your test results by accessing the website listed below and using the CP number for your sample.

For samples taken under a purchased regular or draw hunting licence:

- Bag, tag and freeze your sample as soon as possible as indicated above.
- Complete both sides of the identification tag available at your local SE office and check stations. Complete information and legible writing is critical. (Pencil is preferred).
- When a head sample is turned in at a check station or an SE office you will receive a wallet size card which will have your sample identification number written on it. **Keep this card** as the number is required to access the website listed below for checking on test results.

What are hunters expected to do with the game meat?

Free ranging game animals and game birds in Saskatchewan are generally in good health and are generally safe for human consumption. Test results indicate that the distribution of CWD in wild deer is likely limited to a localized area (WMZ 46) in the Manito Sandhills.

Hunters interested in taking an animal under a CP must be prepared to use the meat. It is the hunter's responsibility to ensure that the meat from any game that they harvest is properly taken care of and is not wasted.

Although SE is not soliciting samples from the province outside of the 2002 CWD Monitoring Area, head samples will be accepted from anywhere in the province for CWD testing. Hunters should debone the animal, double bag the meat, attach the meat seal to the outside of the bag and freeze the meat until test results are available. In the rare event that the sample is positive, SE will contact the hunter and arrange disposal.

What precautions should hunters take when handling the carcass of a deer or elk?

1. Wear rubber gloves when field dressing carcasses.
2. Minimize handling brain or spinal tissues/fluids and wash hands afterwards.
3. Bone out carcasses and avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen and lymph nodes.
4. Do not handle or consume the meat of wild animals that appear sick, regardless of the cause.
5. When taking the animal to a meat processing facility, request that your meat be processed separately from other wild meat.
6. If you harvest an animal that appears unhealthy, contact your local SE office or Conservation Officer.

Test Results: How soon will results be available.

Priority for CWD testing will be given to samples taken from the HRA and HPAs. Test results for these samples should be available within one month from the time the sample was submitted.

Test results for all samples taken outside the HRA or HPAs may take 12 to 14 weeks after the sample is submitted.

For a number of reasons, including freezing and thawing, damage to the brain, etc., some samples cannot be analyzed. If your sample cannot be tested and you have concerns about consumption of the meat please contact the Fish and Wildlife Branch in Regina at (306) 787-2314.

How can I obtain more information on this program?

Contact your local Conservation Officer or the Fish and Wildlife Branch at (306) 787-2314, or by calling the 1-800-567-4224 toll free number.

Chronic Wasting Disease ... what is it?

CWD is a fatal disease of the central nervous system that affects mule deer, white-tailed deer and elk. Current scientific research suggests that free ranging deer are more susceptible to CWD than are elk.

How did CWD get into our wild deer herd?

The source is unknown. We know that CWD has been found in the province in both game farmed animals and in wild deer populations. All interests must work together to contain and eventually eradicate this disease. Hunter and landowner cooperation in this important game management initiative is appreciated.

Is CWD transmittable to humans or domestic livestock?

Health experts indicate that there is no known risk to any person who consumes game meat from an animal infected with CWD. Current scientific research indicates there is no natural transmission of CWD from infected wild animals to traditional livestock.

Is the game meat from a wild deer or elk infected with CWD safe for human consumption?

Although public health experts agree that there is no known scientific evidence to indicate that CWD can affect humans, consumption of meat from an animal you know has been confirmed positive with CWD, or any other disease, is not recommended.

What should hunters do if they see or kill a deer or elk that appears to be sick?

Call your local Conservation Officer, or the Fish and Wildlife Branch in Regina at (306) 787-2314.

If a head sample is positive for CWD, will the hunter be issued a new licence, or given a refund?

Hunters possessing a regular season deer or elk licence will be given a licence refund. Hunters possessing a draw season licence will be given the choice of a licence refund or a new draw licence for the same species in the same zone the following year.

NOTE: In 2002, the $5.00 coupon will not be offered to hunters who turn in samples for CWD testing.